

## HOUSE RESOLUTION 229

By Favors

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Lawrence Curry for his courageous struggle to end segregation in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should recognize those estimable public servants who have dedicated their lives to ensuring justice and human rights for all people; and

WHEREAS, civil rights activist Lawrence Curry of Chattanooga has fought to improve the quality of life for all citizens in his community for almost sixty years; and

WHEREAS, one fateful day, May 1, 1956, Mr. Curry was riding on a bus in Chattanooga and refused to give up his seat, despite the agitated threats of a white passenger, who responded by assaulting him. The other passenger was fined fifty dollars in court, and Mr. Curry walked away empowered and inspired to end segregation in the South; and

WHEREAS, Lawrence Curry promptly joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, began driving the Freedom Canteen during area marches, and offered food and drink to protesters in solidarity; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1950s, while working for the main post office in Chattanooga, Mr. Curry challenged the discriminatory policy of separate break rooms and bathrooms for black and white employees and he was reprimanded for his act of civil disobedience; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Curry reported the incident to authorities in Washington, D.C., and within three weeks the prejudiced policies were overturned; and

WHEREAS, unfortunately his supervisor retaliated by firing him from the post office, at which point Mr. Curry turned to his local black union for help, only to find that they were unsympathetic to his perceived rabblousing; and

WHEREAS, with the help of the Civil Service Board, however, he was able to bring charges against his former supervisor, which resulted in the man's termination from the post office and yet another victory in the name of equality; and

WHEREAS, at the height of the civil rights movement in 1963, Lawrence Curry served as field director in Chattanooga, where he helped register 16,000 new voters, providing his community with the voice and agency to demand more from its leaders; and

WHEREAS, that same year, Mr. Curry was in Birmingham, Alabama, when Colonel Al Lingo and Bull Connor administered the use of K-9 dogs and firehoses to attack him and his fellow protestors, a scene which would become one of the most powerful symbols of racial injustice and inequality in the segregated South; and

WHEREAS, Lawrence Curry later began his campaign for public office, during which he visited local Klan meetings to meet the members and inform them that he was the best candidate for office; and

WHEREAS, despite the opposition of the local Klan, Mr. Curry won the seat as Chattanooga's first black Constable, in which position he served from 1968 to 1970; and

WHEREAS, while working for the Tennessee Department of Highways, now the Tennessee Department of Transportation, Mr. Curry again challenged the discriminatory practice of segregated bathrooms by filing a complaint with the state Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights commissions; and

WHEREAS, his efforts were rewarded with the abolition of segregated facilities at the Tennessee Department of Highways; and

WHEREAS, his many victories in the early fight against inequality have not convinced him that the struggle is over, and Mr. Curry has now undertaken a crusade to get black history full and fair representation in school curricula rather than relegating it to one month out of the year; and

WHEREAS, throughout his lifelong mission for equality, Mr. Curry has drawn strength and faith from the Christian community, which he enjoys through his active membership with the Orchard Knob Baptist Church in Chattanooga; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should recognize the many accomplishments and tireless efforts of this stalwart champion for civil rights; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby honor and commend Mr. Lawrence Curry for his courage and commitment to end segregation in the State of Tennessee and the South, thank him for his dedication to equality and justice for all citizens, and extend to him our best wishes for every success in his continued mission.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.